

40 Years of Blues Company: Pioneers, Perfectionists, Prize-Winners

In actual fact, the 21st May 1976 wasn't a particularly extraordinary day. In Morocco, Abderrahim Goumri was born who later became the long-distance runner, in England, Stuart Bingham was born who was to achieve a certain amount of fame as a snooker player. The weather in Germany was pretty normal for this time of year with an average of 13.4 degrees, in the Federal Law Gazette the law on the smallpox vaccination was published and ABBA was number one in the charts with "Fernando".

But for the German music scene, the 21st May 1976 was a day which was to become poignant for the next four decades: The Blues Company from Osnabrück was performing for the first time - even at that time with Todor "Toscho" Todorovic as lead guitarist and singer. It was the birth of the most successful and long-standing German blues band that is still making its unmistakable musical mark far beyond Germany and Europe's borders 40 years on, in spite of all the short-lived music trends. Only in recent years has the Blues Company gained a wealth of fans due to regular appearances in vast Russia, from St. Petersburg to Krasnoyarsk and in 2015 they also had additional tours in the Balkans and Israel.

During these 40 years the Blues Company (BC) has performed almost 4000 concerts in 14 countries and released more than 20 albums - the first of which was a live LP, in 1980. But even more impressive than these bare facts and figures is the way Todorovic, known to the world as "Toscho", celebrates the blues with his band of men on stage. Toscho lets the guitar fly with his pieces that bubble with elegance, while his distinctive voice gives the songs their striking expression.

The 80s marked the unstoppable rise of the Blues Company, whose genre had previously been the preserve of the top bands from the USA and Great Britain. Regular appearances at the time on the nationwide talkshow "3nach9", extensive tours not only in the Federal Republic but also in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Switzerland, as well as festival appearances in East Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and other countries, made the band known throughout Europe. In 1988 Toscho Todorovic signed up with the IN-AKUSTIK label renowned for high-end sound, with which the Blues Company is still under contract. In 1989 the band was brand ambassador for BOSE - also a company which stands for perfect sound, just as the band do.

The key to the success of BC is the continuity in the members of the band, providing a stable strand of musical DNA: Mike Titre, the second guitarist and second vocalist of the Blues Company, has been standing at Toscho's side since 1980, while drummer Florian Schaub has been keeping the beat since 2000, and bass player Arnold Ogrodnik, the baby of this family, having been on board since 2008. When required, this line-up is also reinforced by the brass musicians from the "Fabulous BC Horns", trumpeter Uwe Nolopp and saxophonist Volker Wink, and by the backing vocals of Maria Nicolaidis and Seda Devran, the "Soul Sistaz".

Those who experience the lively blues scene of today will find it difficult to imagine the early days of the Blues Company. At the end of the 1970s, there was very little blues at all from Germany as the stages were dominated by renowned American musicians who might, at best, allow a German colleague to accompany them. This is also how Toscho made his start, however he soon aspired to form a band of his own, performing his own songs with a sound of his very own, which still retains its fascination even decades later.

With each and every concert, and each and every studio album, the Blues Company has seen its number of fans skyrocket, with a number of its albums having achieved sales figures that are the best that blues records have ever achieved in Germany. The band can now look back on an output encompassing 14 studio albums, 6 compilations, 5 live albums and 3 DVDs/videos - not including the two solo albums Toscho Todorovic has also

released. And this creativity is undiminishing, because for the Blues Company, after the latest album always means before the next album.

Therefore it comes as no surprise that highly prestigious awards, such as "The German Record Critics' Award" (for three productions in a row) or "Jazz Awards" (German phonographic industry association) or the "Blues Louis" awarded by the SWR, grace the shelves of the Blues Company. Although, Toscho & Co may actually feel even more honoured by a completely different and very special use of their studio albums. Sound experts of the most sophisticated high-end hi-fi equipment regularly make use of the Blues Company CDs to demonstrate the impressive brilliance and performance of their sophisticated speaker boxes and finest amplifier technology...

Todor "Toscho" Todorovic – Saving his heart and soul for the stage and studio
The prominent leader of the Blues Company was born in Lingen in Emsland in 1951 to Yugoslavian parents who fled to West Germany after World War II. Toscho's childhood was filled with music, and he was still young when he discovered his love of the blues.

Despite this, he went on to study classical music. Back in the day, this was the only type of music that could be studied, and ultimately paved the way for Toscho Todorovic's current involvement in teaching music as a lecturer at the Institute of Music at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. At this institute, students can even do a Bachelor's degree in pop music – along with classical music, jazz, musicals, elementary music education or vocal training – and not only learn all about virtuosity in playing an instrument and creativity in song writing from Todorovic, but also profit from his professional experience in the other areas of the music business.

Not only does his work as a university lecturer allow Toscho Todorovic to see the bigger picture beyond his own musical work, his civilian commitments in his home town of Osnabrück also allow him to use his fame and connections for a variety of social causes by organising benefit concerts and supporting many charitable events and institutes. The efforts made by the frontman of the Blues Company were recognised in 1993 when he was awarded the citizen's medal by the City of Osnabrück, and again in 2012 when he received the cultural prize awarded by the Osnabrücker Land regional association.

As a fully-fledged musician, Toscho Todorovic is a citizen of the world and is constantly travelling to perform with the Blues Company. Along with traditional English-speaking homelands of blues, his interest has long been focussed on Eastern Europe. Whether in Hungary or in Poland, or even in Siberia, again and again he finds himself being approached by young blues guitarists who expressly refer to him as a role model. In 2012 there was an arduous twelve-day tour of Russia with ten concerts together with his Blues Company colleague Mike Titre and a group of Russian musicians which, despite covering 14,000 kilometres by plane, the Trans-Siberian Railway and the tour bus and crossing through five time zones, became an unforgettable pleasure. And not only the Russian fans have many more concerts to look forward to by the most successful and productive German blues band – after all, Toscho and friends live for the blues...

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